



DIET & DENTAL HEALTH

What you eat and drink plays an important role in the health of your teeth and gums.

It is not only **what** you eat that matters, but also **how often** your teeth are exposed to sugar and acidic foods and drinks throughout the day.

A balanced diet, sensible snacking and good oral hygiene can all help reduce your risk of tooth decay, erosion and gum problems.

Sugar & Tooth Decay

When we eat or drink foods containing sugars, bacteria in dental plaque use these sugars to produce acids.

These acids temporarily lower the pH in your mouth and can begin to weaken the outer surface of your teeth.

Over time, repeated acid attacks can lead to tooth decay.

The important factor is often frequency.

Having sugary foods or drinks regularly throughout the day means your teeth are exposed to repeated acid attacks, giving them less time to recover.

Stephan's Curve

You may hear us talk about **Stephan's Curve** when discussing diet and tooth decay.

Stephan's Curve shows what happens to the pH in your mouth after you eat or drink something containing fermentable carbohydrates, such as sugar.

What happens?

Eat or drink → bacteria produce acid → mouth pH falls → enamel is temporarily softened → saliva helps neutralise the acid → pH gradually returns towards normal

After an acidic episode, your saliva helps neutralise the acids and provides minerals that help your teeth recover.

However, if you are constantly eating or drinking throughout the day, your mouth has less opportunity to return to its normal pH.

Think about it like this:

Frequent snacking

Breakfast → snack → sweet drink → snack → fizzy drink → biscuit → snack



Repeated acid attacks



Less time for your teeth to recover

Compared with:

Structured meals

Breakfast → lunch → dinner



Fewer acid attacks



More time for your teeth to recover

This is why how often you consume sugar can be just as important as how much you



Watch what you drink

Drinks can be a significant source of both sugar and acid.

Try to make **water** your main drink throughout the day.

Be particularly mindful of:

- Fizzy drinks
- Energy drinks
- Sports drinks

- Fruit juices
- Squashes
- Flavoured waters
- Sweetened tea and coffee

Even drinks that are marketed as healthier options can contain naturally occurring or added sugars and may also be acidic.

A simple tip

If you are having an acidic or sugary drink, try to have it **with a meal rather than sipping it throughout the day**.

Avoid holding or swishing acidic drinks around your mouth, as this increases the contact between the drink and your teeth.



Snacking & your teeth

It is normal to feel hungry between meals, but frequent snacking can increase the number of times your teeth are exposed to acids.

Where possible, choose tooth-friendly snacks such as:

- Cheese
- Plain yoghurt
- Vegetables
- Nuts
- Eggs
- Other nutritious, low-sugar options

Try to keep sugary foods and drinks to **mealtimes**, rather than having them repeatedly between meals.



It's not just sweets

Sugar can be found in many foods and drinks, including some products that may not seem particularly sweet.

Look out for sugars in:

- Biscuits and cakes
- Cereals
- Cereal bars
- Flavoured yoghurts
- Sauces
- Squashes
- Fruit juices
- Sweetened drinks

- Dried fruit
- Sweets and chocolate

Checking food labels can help you identify products that contain added sugars.

What about fruit

Fruit is an important part of a healthy, balanced diet.

However, fruit contains natural sugars and some fruits are acidic, so eating or drinking fruit products frequently can contribute to acid exposure.

Whole fruit is generally preferable to fruit juice or smoothies, as these can make it easier to consume larger amounts of sugar and acid.

Try to enjoy fruit as part of a meal rather than continually snacking on it throughout the day.

Protecting your teeth from acid

Acid does not only come from sugar.

Acidic foods and drinks can contribute to **dental erosion**, where the hard surface of the tooth is gradually worn away.

Acidic foods and drinks can include:

- Citrus fruits
- Fruit juices
- Fizzy drinks
- Energy drinks
- Sports drinks
- Vinegar-based foods
- Some flavoured drinks

After acidic foods or drinks

Don't brush immediately.

Give your saliva time to neutralise the acids and allow your teeth to recover before brushing.

Drinking water afterwards can help wash away acids and reduce their contact with your teeth.

A simple approach to a tooth-friendly diet

You don't need to eliminate sugar from your diet.

Instead, focus on **frequency, balance and timing**.

Try to:

- ✓ Keep sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes
- ✓ Avoid constant grazing throughout the day
- ✓ Choose water as your main drink
- ✓ Choose whole fruit rather than juice where possible
- ✓ Limit fizzy, energy and sports drinks
- ✓ Choose nutritious, lower-sugar snacks
- ✓ Give your teeth time between meals and snacks
- ✓ Avoid brushing immediately after acidic foods or drinks
- ✓ Maintain good brushing and interdental cleaning

Diet & your oral hygiene routine

A healthy diet works alongside good oral hygiene.

We recommend brushing your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and cleaning between your teeth regularly.

Your diet, brushing routine, fluoride exposure and regular dental care all work together to help protect your teeth and gums.

Your diet is personal to you

There is no single diet that is right for everyone. During your dental appointments, we may discuss your diet if we notice signs of tooth decay, erosion or other oral health concerns.

Our advice will be tailored to your individual circumstances and designed to help you make realistic changes that fit into your everyday life.

Small changes can make a big difference

You don't have to change everything at once.

Reducing the **frequency of sugary and acidic foods and drinks**, choosing water more often and giving your teeth time to recover between meals can make a meaningful difference to your oral health.

Eat well. Drink wisely. Give your teeth time to recover.

Cranfield Dental Care

Personal, professional dental care for you and your family.

Contact our Reception team 01462 434323 for general enquiries, or speak to our **Treatment**

Coordinator (TCO) 07714117790 for advice and information about your treatment options.

We're here to help you understand what's available and find the right next step for you